McDougall - Secord, Guide to the Goldfields, 1898

Excerpt

THE EDMONTON OVERLAND ROUTE TO THE YUKON

The Government has undertaken to open up an Edmonton-Yukon overland route as a pack and wagon road at once. A pack trail for a great part of the way already exists. A party are now at work cutting out a wagon road from Edmonton to Peace River, which portion of the road will be completed and ready for traffic about February 1st, or earlier. The Government has a party exploring the route from Peace River on, and it is their intention to open up at once the rest of the way as a pack and wagon road, thus making the Edmonton overland route the shortest, cheapest and best way to reach the richest gold fields ever discovered.

This is sure to be the popular route next season for it has so many advantages which should recommend it to the prospective miner. When you reach Edmonton you strike a gold bearing river -- the Saskatchewan -- on which placer mining has been carried on continuously for over thirty years and is still being worked by several hundred white men who make $1.50 or $2.00 per day, sometimes more. There are also some six steam dredging machines at work on the river taking out gold. A smelter is being built to extract the gold from the immense quantity of black sand that is found in the river. South of this little or no gold is found in the streams, but the further northwest one goes the richer one finds the gold deposits. Small settlements

are met with at intervals along the way for about 400 miles, where horses, cattle, hay or assistance may be obtained.

About 100 miles further on a gold bearing country is struck, rich in possibilities, and between there and the Yukon no doubt lie millions of undiscovered gold, waiting for the lucky prospector to come along and unearth it. A number of our own people have already gone and several more of our leading citizens are going in the spring.

The best time to start from here is about the first of March for the Overland Route. One can then get through to the Nelson branch of the Liard River about the time these rivers open. One can leave here with horses and sleighs, carrying his own supplies and feed for his horses which can be replenished along the way as far as Peace River. Each horse will haul about 500 pounds. From the Nelson branch of the Liard River there is a choice of routes. To either continue overland, prospecting on the way, or float down the Nelson into the Laird, then into the Mackenzie down to the Peel and across a half mile portage to the Porcupine, then down to the Yukon. In this way the rapids and difficult places on the Athabasca are avoided.

Travel in any direction in this country is perfectly safe. No fear of Indians, plenty of fish in the streams and quite a lot of game, both small and large.

Here is the actual route to follow: Edmonton to Pembina River 60 miles, plenty of feed and water and wood for fuel,

open prairie, good wagon road.

Pembina River to Fort Assiniboine on Athabasca River 30 miles, good wagon road open, bush and prairie, good feed and water.

Fort Assiniboine to Lesser Slave Lake, southwest shore, 120 miles. From the river to Birch hills 75 miles, open bush jack pine and poplar with small meadows, good feed and plenty of water; the other 45 miles is poplar and spruce through which a wagon road is being cut. Good feed and water from there to the settlement on the west end of Lesser Slave Lake, 30 miles good open country, low land, not swampy, good feed, plenty fuel, small farming settlement and trading posts.

Slave Lake to Peace River Crossing 80 miles, small farming and trading settlements, grist mill and Roman Catholic and English missions, good wagon road, plenty of feed and water.

Peace River Crossing to the forks of the trail running from Dunvegan to St. John.

Dunvegan to the Peace River Crossing, 48 miles. Open prairie country, plenty of wood and water and feed good.

Time from Edmonton to Dunvegan by this route 23 days made by Campbell and Brenton in fall of '97.

Sam Cunningham made trip from Lake St. Ann, 50 miles west of Edmonton, to Dunvegan by an alternate route by way of Sturgeon Lake in 22 days with loaded pack horses last fall.

Forks of trail to Pine River Crossing, 83 miles. Open bush, spruce and poplar, some pine near the river, pack trail from the forks. Can easily be made a wagon road, feed and water all the way.

Pine River Crossing to forks of Nelson River, 120 miles. Open country, first-class pack trail all the way, pelnty feed and water.

Nelson River to Liard River at foot of canon, 125 miles. Larger river navigable for steamers during high water.

Liard River Crossing at foot of canon to head of Devil's portage, 35 miles. River difficult on this stretch, but land journey all right.

Head of Devil's portage to foot of Brule portage, 40 miles. Good river navigation on this stretch, passing the Rocky Mountains which do not cross the river to the north side. Country timbered, but not rugged, and feed good.

Brule portage to mouth of Dease River, 75 miles. Country smoothly rolling, timbered, good feed.

Mouth of Dease to Frances Lake, 100 miles. Country moderately undulating, lightly timbered, feed good.

Frances Lake to Pelly River, 50 miles. Country grassy, lightly timbered, not rugged, plenty of water.

Pelly River to Dawson City, 450 miles down stream. River navigable, and country on either bank no rugged, lightly timbered

with plenty of grass.

In the winter travelers use snow for water and horses do not require any water, as they eat snow. Of course water can be got where creeks and rivers are crossed, by cutting through the ice.

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